

In the spring of 1999 Gantz-Wiley Research conducted a survey of employees of the Saint Paul Police Department for the Saint Paul City Council. The Council commissioned this employee survey because of concerns expressed about Police Department operations by some Police Department employees. The survey raised two sets of issues. One group of issues related to internal Police Department operations. Another set of issues related to matters directly affecting services to the public. This report addresses issues involving police services to the public. We will address concerns regarding internal Police Department operations in future Council Research reports.

Gantz-Wiley Research provided a preliminary analysis of the survey data that identified strengths and opportunities for improvement within the Police Department. Council Research did a further analysis of the survey data including a content analysis of written comments offered by respondents. This analysis led to the identification of eleven areas where respondents raised concerns regarding Police management decisions. Three areas directly address service to the public. These were risk to the public, police officer safety and the adequacy of police resources. The other eight areas of concern involve the internal operations of the Police Department. These eight areas were working conditions, promotions and transfers, discrimination, employee involvement, performance feedback and recognition, senior management, alleged use of traffic quotas and the qualifications of police officer recruits. As noted earlier, this report will examine only the three direct public service issues.

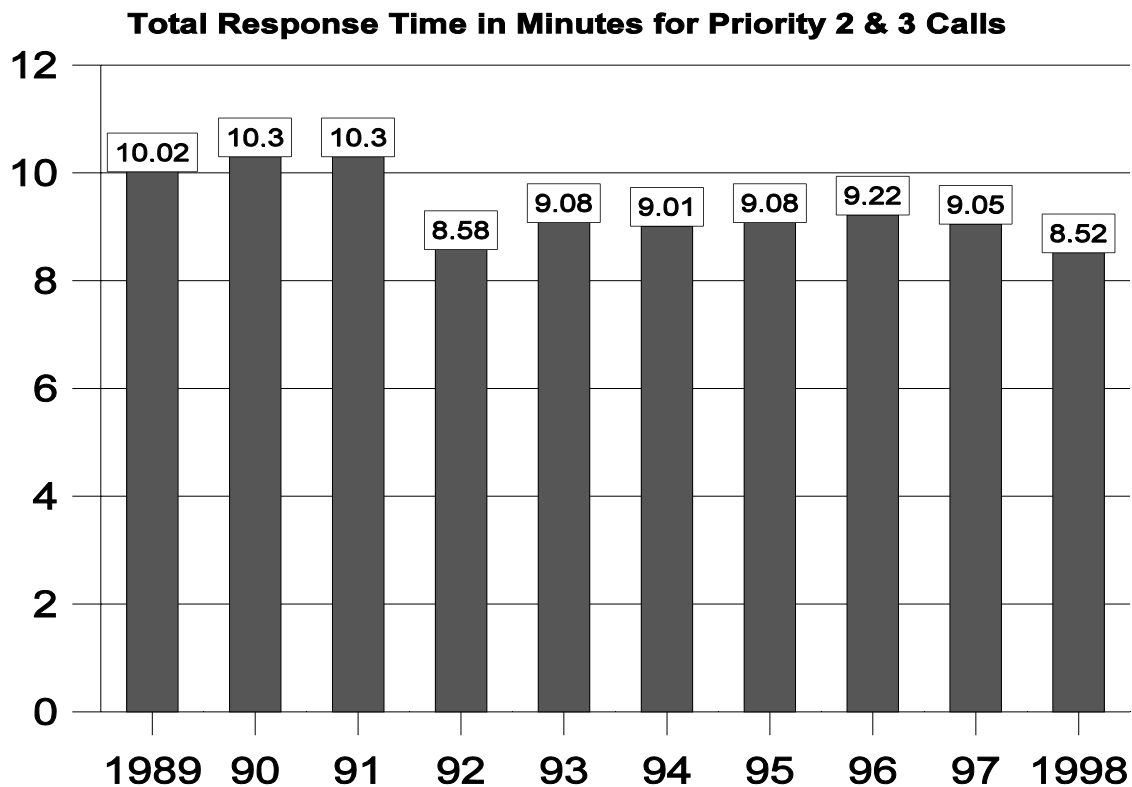
Risk to the Public

Before beginning to analyze data, it is important to understand the essence of the concerns of some Police employees about risk to the public. The claim is that decisions made by senior Police Department leaders in recent years have increased the risks to which the public in Saint Paul are exposed. This concern arises from differences of opinion about how police managers deploy officers. The most common complaint is that senior police leaders have created too many specialized units at the expense of street patrol, leading to fewer officers responding to citizens' calls for service.

It is, of course, impossible to directly measure risk to the public in Saint Paul. It is, however, possible to identify and measure a variable that is indicative of risk to the public. The indicator we have chosen for this analysis is "total response time." Total response time is the time, in minutes, between when the Police Department receives a call for service and when a police unit arrives at the scene. It is presumed the public may be at risk when a call for service is made for a priority two or three incident and that the public is no longer at risk when a police unit arrives at the scene. Priority two and three calls are the most serious crime types affecting the public, involving crimes such as robbery, burglary, domestic abuse and other serious criminal incidents. Priority one calls, which are not included in this analysis, involve incidents where police officers themselves are in jeopardy.

If senior Police Department leaders have made decisions in recent years that have increased risks

to the public, then one would expect this to be reflected in slower response times for priority two and three calls. A review of Police Department total response time data for priority two and three calls for service over the past ten years shows this is not so. The data on total response time, as displayed in the chart below, do not show any increase in recent years. Total response time has, in fact, been essentially unchanged since 1992 when it declined from an average of about 10 minutes for the 1989-1991 period to an average of about nine minutes for the 1992-1998 period.



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en that total response time has remained essentially unchanged for the last seven years and has decreased when compared to the 1989-1991 period, we can infer that risk to the public has not increased in recent years

Police Officer Safety

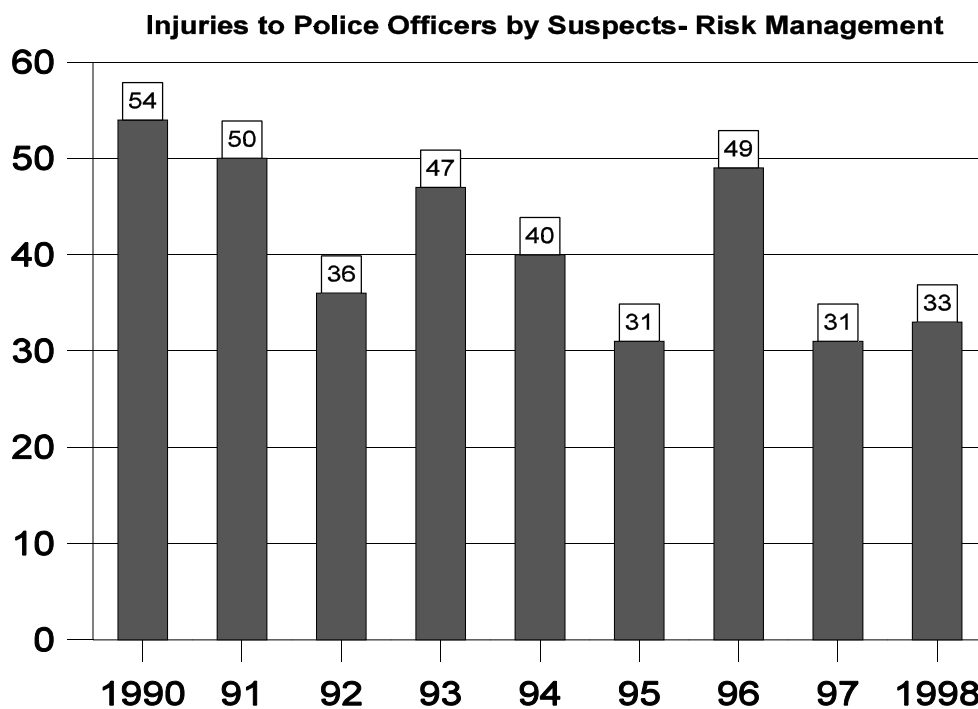
Another belief of some Police employees is that decisions by senior Police Department managers

have increased the physical risks for police officers in Saint Paul. They generally feel police managers are assigning insufficient numbers of officers to street patrol and that these inadequate numbers require street patrol officers to engage in higher risk activities or to operate with inadequate backup.

Directly measuring “risk” is not possible because it is based on individual perceptions. However, if Saint Paul police officers are at greater risk, one would expect this increased risk to be exhibited by an increasing number of physical injuries to police officers caused by hostile encounters with suspects. Measuring the extent to which Saint Paul police officers are being injured as a result of hostile encounters with suspects is possible.

All City of Saint Paul employees are required to report all on-the-job injuries to Risk Management. Risk Management then uses these injury reports for injury prevention and worker compensation activities. Data from “First Report of Injury” files in the Office of Risk Management were selected and sorted to isolate injuries to police officers resulting from hostile encounters with suspects for the years 1990 to 1998. These data are displayed in the following chart.

An examination of these data shows nothing to suggest suspects are injuring Saint Paul police

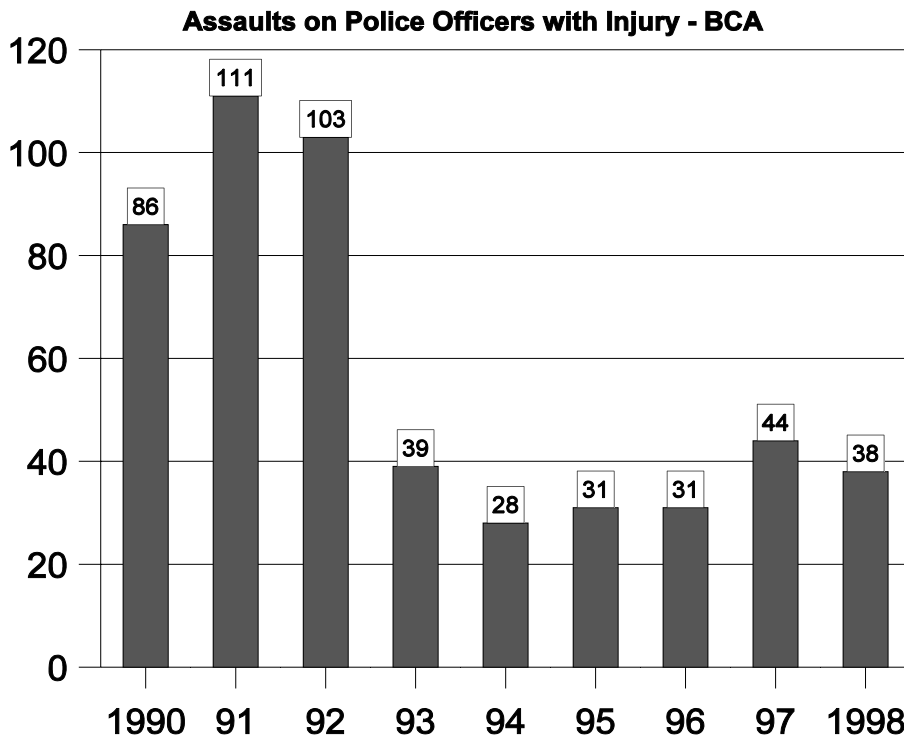


officers in greater numbers in recent years than in the past. In fact, the data suggest Saint Paul

police officers are experiencing somewhat fewer suspect-caused injuries than was the case earlier this decade.

Another source of information regarding injuries to Saint Paul police officers are reports submitted by the Saint Paul Police Department to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The reports are tabulated annually and records go back more than ten years. These reports also distinguish assaults involving injury from those that did not result in an injury to the officer. However, these data are problematic as, unlike the Risk Management data, we are unable to review the records upon which these reports are based to validate these data. Also, the dramatic changes in the numbers from the 1990-1992 period to the 1993-1998 period suggest there may have been changes in reporting processes. Nonetheless, these data also show that injuries to Saint Paul police officers have been generally stable in recent years. The number of assaults with injury to Saint Paul police officers reported to the BCA each year from 1990 to 1998 are shown in the chart below.

Neither the Risk Management data, in which we have a high degree of confidence, nor the BCA



data, in which we are less confident, support the claim that Saint Paul police officers have been at greater physical risk in recent years compared to earlier years. In fact, these data suggest that Saint Paul police officers are experiencing fewer injuries caused by hostile encounters with suspects than has been the case in the past.

Police Resources

A large number of respondents to the Gantz-Wiley survey indicated the Saint Paul Police Department did not have sufficient staff or adequate facilities or equipment to meet its public safety responsibilities. In the survey, 71% of police employees answered unfavorably to the question of whether there were enough people to get the Department's work done. Only 49% of respondents indicated the Department had adequate equipment to do their jobs well and complaints that the Department lacked adequate facilities were commonly found in the written comments section of the survey.

Research Methods

To investigate claims that the Department is provided inadequate resources to meet its public safety responsibilities, Council Research interviewed 42 police officers with the rank of lieutenant or above. We believe these senior officers, many of whom are command level supervisors, have the knowledge and experience to evaluate whether work units or individual employees lack the resources needed to meet Departmental responsibilities. In addition to these senior officers, we asked the same questions of a group of front-line police officers.

Each interview participant was asked to address specifically what staff, equipment or facilities were insufficient for the Police Department to meet its responsibilities. Questions were phrased in a way to avoid "wish lists" of requests for resources.¹

The interviews conducted by Council Research indicated the Police Department has adequate resources to meet its public safety responsibilities. According to interview participants there are currently no responsibilities which are unmet because of insufficient staffing or inadequate equipment or facilities. Respondents, however, did report there were areas where the Department may have difficulty meeting these responsibilities in the future; namely the staffing level of street patrol officers. Also reported were a number of equipment, facility and other staffing issues which were identified as problematic but which did not prevent the Police Department from meeting its responsibilities. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Staffing

Although no one interviewed said the Police Department is failing to meet its basic responsibilities because of staffing shortages or allocations, a number of senior level officers reported a shortage of patrol officers. While these shortages have not created a situation in

¹See appendix for interview protocol.

which the Department cannot provide the type of service the public expects, a sizable number of respondents suggested this may not be the case in the near future if the number of patrol officers does not increase. At the moment the Department is 31 officers below its maximum strength provided for in the City Budget. Several reasons were given for this deficiency. In the last two years there has been an unprecedented number of retirements due to demographics and changes in public employee pension rules. Some respondents also suggested vacancies are slow to be filled because of the region's labor shortage and the difficulty of finding candidates who meet the high standards set by the Department. While interview participants said shortages did not jeopardize public safety, many were concerned officers were overworked and unable to do tasks, such as community policing activities, follow-up activities and respond in a timely manner to lower priority calls. Respondents differed in the number of officers they felt were necessary to correct this situation. Most felt the Department could ensure police responsibilities in the future would be met if the Department could achieve the maximum strength allocated in the budget. A smaller number of respondents believed hiring an additional 100-150 patrol officers is necessary to meet the Department's future responsibilities.

The FORCE unit, a community policing effort which focuses on problem properties and street level narcotic activities, was also reported to be short-staffed. The unit has an allocated complement of 20 officers; however, at the present, it has five vacancies. At the same time its call loads are at an all-time high. Respondents reported FORCE has enough officers to meet its responsibilities but is unable to undertake the activities which would make it a more effective unit. For instance, there are times when FORCE does not have enough officers to execute a search warrant for a problem property and must find alternative means to deal with the property, such as "knock and talks" where officers discuss with residents of problem properties their concerns about criminal activities.

Investigative units at the district stations and in the Crimes Against Property unit were also reported to have a significant number of vacancies. A number of respondents stated the lack of staff has forced the Department to adjust its criteria for deciding which cases to seriously investigate. According to several officers, higher thresholds for determining which crimes to investigate have been implemented. In many areas of property crime, no investigation takes place beyond taking a crime report. Some respondents were concerned that if the staffing situation was not addressed, the Department will soon only investigate certain felony property crimes. Nonetheless, there was not a single respondent that felt the staffing level of investigators prevented the Department from meeting its responsibilities.

Over half of interview participants reported the Information Services (I.S.) staff needed additional employees. According to respondents, I.S. support staff do an excellent job; however,

there are simply not enough of them to meet the Department's needs. Police officers rely increasingly on computers for report writing, investigations and record keeping duties. When software, network or hardware problems occur, police work time is lost because I.S. staff cannot respond quickly. In addition, there are times when problems occur during weekends and night-shifts when there is not an I.S. support employee on duty. The Police Department is open

continuously and should, therefore, have an I.S. staff person available at all times. Most respondents who identified I.S. support staff shortages as a problem area, acknowledged that the high demand for I.S. professionals makes it difficult for the City to find qualified staff willing to work those hours.

The emergency communications center was mentioned by five interview participants as an area which needs additional staff. One senior level officer stated the industry standard for communication centers is to have, at any given time, as many employees as the center has lines. This would require the Department to hire nine to ten more telecommunicators above the Department's allotted strength. However, interview subjects who identified the staffing of the communication center as a problem area said the lack of staff did not prevent the Department from meeting its public safety responsibilities.

Several respondents reported the records unit did not have sufficient staff to process, file and archive the high volume of records it must handle. The records backlog, staff report, results in requests for records being delayed and sworn officers having to perform clerical duties. No interview participant stated the staff shortage in the records unit affected the Department's ability to meet its public safety responsibilities.

Equipment

Interview participants reported the Police Department's equipment does not prevent it from meeting its responsibilities. However, a number of equipment areas were identified as problematic, primarily in the areas of information technology, radios, telecommunications and squad cars.

Information technology used for report writing was the most prevalent equipment problem identified. Since August of 1999, police officers have entered reports on computers connected via modem to a central data base. All officers on standard street patrol duty have been assigned a lap top computer for this purpose. In the next 12 months lap tops will be fitted with a wireless modem which will allow officers to transmit reports from the field.

Most of the problems cited with computerized reports are related to the Records Management System (RMS) software which officers use to enter and transmit reports. A majority of staff interviewed stated the RMS software is inefficient and cumbersome to use. Several stated electronic reports took two to three times as long to complete as written ones. Also, it was mentioned transmitting reports via modem created numerous problems. Foremost mentioned was that it was necessary for officers to leave street patrol duties to write reports at district

stations or the Public Safety Building because a modem is needed to send a report. Furthermore, interview participants reported not enough computer ports were provided in Department facilities to accommodate staff needs. It was also noted that report writing rooms lack a sufficient number of printers and the rooms provide no privacy for officers to write reports. It is expected the conversion to a wireless report system should alleviate most of these problems.

However, in the meantime, staff indicate the current report writing system results in inefficiencies.

Among respondents, radios and telephone equipment was the next most reported equipment problem area. According to staff, the Department's internal radio system is more than thirty years old. Squad radios are unable to communicate with or pick up signals of other public safety agencies. This makes it difficult to communicate about a crime in progress which may cross jurisdictional boundaries. Also, it was reported Department phones are not equipped with caller I.D. One respondent suggested this technology would be particularly helpful to investigators.

The lack of squad cars was also cited as a problem. It was reported there is one car for every two investigators. Therefore, investigators must either double up on calls or must wait at the station until a car returns. Also, it was mentioned that at one district station the afternoon patrol shift start time is staggered because some officers must wait for cars from officers returning from the late morning shift.

There was a basic consensus among interview participants that while the Department's equipment problems created inefficiencies, they did not prevent the Department from meeting its responsibilities.

Facilities

Interview participants reported existing facilities do not prohibit the Police Department from meeting its responsibilities. The only existing facility that was consistently mentioned as problematic was the Central Station located at the corner of Arlington and Rice Street. Respondents state the Central Station is cramped, poorly maintained, has little room for community meetings and no storage for equipment. There were even reports that building inspectors found fecal matter in the water supply. It was also mentioned the Department overall lacked proper storage facilities for equipment and uniforms. In addition, it was reported the Department lacked secure storage for documents in office areas. The heating/cooling system in the Public Safety Building was identified as an area which could be dramatically improved. Several staff members mentioned it was necessary to bring portable heaters into their offices during the winter. Furthermore, there were complaints about poor air quality in the building. Finally, it was noted there is a need for the mounted patrol stables to be closer to the City. It was estimated the relocation of the stables, which are currently outside of Hastings, Minnesota, could save the City 1100 hours of staff travel time annually.

Summary

When the results of the Gantz-Wiley survey are compared to the interview responses of senior officers, there appears to be significantly different views about whether the Police Department has adequate resources. These different views may be explained by the fact the survey and interviews were asking two distinct questions. The interviews examined whether the

Department was failing to meet basic public safety responsibilities while the survey examined the question of whether individual employees had sufficient resources to do their jobs well. This does not mean, however, that the results of the two research instruments are necessarily inconsistent. The interviews conducted by Council Research uncovered problem areas which appear to affect the Department's ability to be a highly effective and efficient organization. One could conclude that the Gantz-Wiley respondents negative responses may be the result of some of these less effective or efficient management practices identified in the interviews. However, these practices, at least according to interview participants, do not prevent the Department from meeting its public safety responsibilities.

A serious staffing shortage does appear to exist, especially in the areas of street patrol, the FORCE unit and I.S. support staff. According to the interviews, these shortages are due to early retirements, demographics and a tight labor market. Most of the problems associated with staffing vacancies will be addressed once the Department is able to fill open positions. The only area identified by respondents that may need more staff above current budgeted levels, in order for the Department to meet its future responsibilities, is street patrol. Otherwise, the conclusion drawn from the interview data is that the Saint Paul Police Department has adequate resources to meet its public safety responsibilities.

Conclusion

The information reviewed for this study does not support the claims that the public or officers are at an increased risk or that the Department lacks the resources to meet its basic responsibilities. Specifically, this analysis finds that:

- Based on the Police Department's "total response time" for priority two and three calls, there is no evidence to support the assertion that the public is at greater risk than in prior years; and
- Based on the officer assault data, there is no evidence to indicate officers face a greater physical risk than in prior years; and
- Based on interviews conducted with the Police Department's senior officers, there is no evidence to support the assertion that the Department lacks adequate resources to meet its public safety responsibilities.

Appendix

Interview Questions for Police Department Study

Where do you work in the Police Department?

What are your responsibilities?

1. What police work for which you are responsible is not being done because you do not have enough employees? *(If none, go to #4)*
2. What are the consequences of you not meeting these responsibilities?
3. How many employees, of what type, would it take to meet your responsibilities?
4. What other Saint Paul Police Department responsibilities are not being met because there are not enough Police employees? *(If none, go to #7)*
5. What are the consequences of the Police Department not meeting these responsibilities?
6. How many employees, of what type, would it take to meet these responsibilities?
7. What responsibilities is the Saint Paul Police Department not meeting because the Department does not have proper equipment? *(If none, go to #10)*
8. What are the consequences of the Police Department not having proper equipment?
9. What equipment does the Police Department need to be able to fulfill its responsibilities?
10. What responsibilities is the Saint Paul Police Department not meeting because you do not have proper facilities? *(If none, go to 13)*
11. What are the consequences of the Police Department not having proper facilities?
12. What facilities or facility improvements does the Police Department need to be able to fulfill its responsibilities?
13. Based on what you have observed, is there a difference in the level of physical risk for police officers in Saint Paul today, compared to 10 years ago?

If so, what is the difference?
14. Why do you think there is a greater (or lesser) physical risk?

(Conclude interview)

